DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 119 CS 512 252

AUTHOR	Elias, Habibah; Pihie, Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope
TITLE	Listening Competence among University Students.
PUB DATE	2003-06-18
NOTE	11p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; *Academic Aptitude; *Communication Skills; Curriculum Development; Higher Education; *Listening Skills

ABSTRACT

University graduates should not only be good communicators, but also good listeners. Good listening skills are essential for effective communication yet these skills are often overlooked when communication is analyzed. In teaching and learning processes, good listening skills help students improve their learning and ensure quality teaching. A study was conducted on a group of 202 university students taking an educational management course as an elective. The findings from the study indicate that university students are lacking in listening skills. This implies that the students have not utilized their potential in learning and in their effort to accumulate knowledge and skills. In class, they may not pay attention well, which has repercussions on their achievement. In order to improve students' listening skills, universities can embark on a training program for students. Studies have shown that training in listening skills have enhanced students' ability to listen and their long-term achievement. (Contains 3 tables and 11 references.) (Author/RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 478 119

Listening Competence among University Students

By

Habibah Elias (Ph.D)
Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie (Ph.D)

Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
H. Elias
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

Abstract

University graduates should not only be better communicators, but also better listeners. Good listening skills are essential for effective communication and are often overlooked when communication is analysed. In the teaching and learning process good listening skills help students to improve their learning and to ensure quality teaching. A study was conducted to a group of 202 university students taking Educational Management course as an elective. Findings indicated that university students are still lacking in listening skills. Only about 40.6% of the students are found to be in the higher category of listening skills. This paper will discuss the implications of the findings on improving the teaching and learning process and the long term achievement of students.

Introduction

Robertson (1994) noted that those individuals who have advanced the furthest in their professional careers are notably the better listeners. The International Listening Association (1995) defines listening as " the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and / or nonverbal messages". Through the normal course of a day, listening is used nearly twice as much as speaking and four to five times as much as reading and writing (Rivers, 1981). In a study of 500 corporations, Wolvin and Coakley (1991) found that listening was perceived to be crucial for communication at work with regards to entry –level employment, job success, general career competence, managerial competency and effectiveness of relationships between supervisors and subordinates. Corporations find that listening is important for employees at all levels (Mckenzie and Clark, 1995). Yet listening remains one of the least understood processes in learning despite the recognition of the critical role it plays in communication and in language acquisition (Morley, 1991). It was also reported that formal teaching of listening tends to be one of the most neglected areas in business educational curriculums (Schramm & Wayne, 1993).

CS 512 252

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

According to Wynn (1984), active listening can reduce misunderstanding in interpersonal communication. It enhances empathy and strengthens one's ability to feel good about what another is doing. The importance of active listening is further supported by Theodore (1991) who states that active listening is important in one to one communication as well as in group settings. Its importance is magnified in group communication because the type of response influences many rather than one. Active listening also requires attention to both thoughts and feelings.

Students need to practice and acquire skills to be good listeners because information is something intangible that is sent by the speaker and received by an active listener. For students to be good listeners, the first skill that they need to practice is to act like a good listener for example by giving attention to the channel of information.

The second skill in good listening is by using other bodily receptors for example by looking at the other person. By doing so the person can pick up the non verbal signals that people send when they are speaking. There will be eye contacts with the speaker and he will work harder to send information when he realizes that there is a receptive audience. The eye contact between the speaker and the listener need to be established for effective communication.

The next important skill in active listening is to react to the speaker by sending out non verbal signals. The face should reflect emotion that indicate the person is following what the speaker is saying. By moving one's face towards the information he can concentrate better on what is being said.

It is difficult to receive information when the listener is also sending out information at the same time. A good listener will stop talking and use receptive language instead like `I see..... ' , `Oh really! ' that is words or phrases that follow as well as encourage the speaker's train of thought. This will make the listener react to the ideas presented and not to the person. Asking questions on the information is preferred to giving opinion on the information presented.

Another important skill is to concentrate on what the speaker is saying. One cannot fully hear the speaker's point of view or process information if he argues mentally or judge what he is saying before it is completed. An open mind is a mind that is receiving and listening to information.

Problem and Purpose of study

Despite the current enthusiasm for teaching critical thinking and the need acknowledged by many educators to improve students' speaking and listening skills, very few educational institutions have actually put critical listening skills into their curriculum (Hunsaker, 1991). One reason listening skills have been very slow in becoming a part of the formal instruction program at most schools is that many people confuse `listening' with `hearing'. Listening is actually more than hearing as it involves sensing, interpretation, evaluation and response as well. Furthermore, it is through speaking and listening that students acquire knowledge, develop language and increase their

understanding of themselves. As students learn, they learn to think, and the teaching of listening skills can be a primary strategy in the development of critical thinking skills. Some of the skills needed for effective critical listening are : evaluating the strength of the speaker's main ideas; recognizing the difference between fact and opinion; and recognizing the use of loaded language, stereotypes and emotional appeals. These skills can be taught to students.

On realizing the importance of listening skills, a study was conducted to examine what is the status of listening skills among university students. At university level, students are expected to learn independently and they have to take responsibility on their learning. During lectures or tutorials, they have to depend a lot on their listening skills for understanding of the course content. If students do not pay attention to lectures or they do not have good listening skills, then they may lose many important points delivered during lectures.

Objective of study

The objective of the study was to examine the status of listening skills among university students. How students perceive their own listening skills will indicate their awareness on the importance of listening skills in learning.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) What is the level of listening skills of UPM students?
2) What is the level of listening skills of Education and Non Education Students?
3) What is the overall pattern of listening skills among university students?

Subjects

To answer the research questions, 202 undergraduate students were requested to complete a questionnaire. Subjects of the study were enrolled in various faculties in Universiti Putra Malaysia following Educational Management Couses in November Semester 2000/2001. Faculties involved were the Faculty of Educational Studies, Science and Environmental studies, Economics and Management, Computer Science and Information Technology. Subjects from the Faculty of Educational Studies comprised of fresh students as well as those with teaching experience.

Instrument

The instrument utilized for the study was adapted from an instrument called Diagnosing Your Listening Skills (Glenn and Pond , 1989). The instrument consists of 15 yes/no items to test the respondents' ability to listen effectively.

Findings

Responses by subjects were categorized into good listening skills and weak listening skills. Respondents who achieved a score of between 9 to 15 are categorized as having

good listening skills. On the other hand , respondents who achieved a scor e of 8 and below were categorized as having weak listening skills.

Table 1 : Frequency and Percentage of listening skills scores

Listening Skill Scores	Frequency	Percentage
2.00	1	.5
3.00	2	1.0
4.00	7	3.5
5.00	14	6.9
6.00	24	11.9
7.00	38	18.8
8.00	34	16.8
9.00	36	17.8
10.00	16	7.9
11.00	13	6.4
12.00	6	3.0
13.00	3	1.5
14.00	2	1.0
15.00	6	3.0
Total	202	100

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of listening skill scores for respondents. The mean score is 8.13, with a minimum score of 2 and maximum score of 15. A high percentage of respondents (59.4%) fall in the lower category , that is below the mean. Only 40.6 % of respondents achieved scores above the mean.

Table 2 : Mean scores according to items in the Listening Skills Scale

Listening skills Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I frequently attempt to listen to several conversations at the sama time.(-ve)	.59	.49
2. I like people to give me only the facts and then let me make my own interpretation.(-ve)	.42	.49
3. I sometimes pretend to pay attention to people.(-ve)	.42	.49
4. I consider myself a good judge of nonverbal communications.(+ve)	.58	.49
5. I usually know what another person is going to say before he or she says it.(-ve)	.69	.46
6. I usually end conversations that don't interest me by diverting my attention from the speaker.(-ve)	.62	.48

7. I frequently nod, frown or in some other way let the speaker know how I feel about what he or she is saying.(-ve)	.35	.47
8. I usually respond immediately when someone has finished talking.(-ve)	.33	.47
9. I evaluate what is being said while it is being said (-ve)	.35	.47
10. I usually formulate a response while the other person is still talking .(-ve)	.46	.50
11. The speaker's delivery style frequently keeps me from listening to content.(-ve)	.35	.47
12. I usually ask people what they have said rather than guess at the meaning.(+ve)	.81	.38
13. I make a concerted effort to understand other people's point of view.(+ve)	.91	.27
14. I frequently hear what I expect to hear rather than what is said (-ve)	.51	.50
15.Most people feel that I have understood their point of view when we disagree.(+ve)	.72	.44

The above table shows the mean values of the items in the listening skills scale. Among the 15 items, item number 13 has the highest mean score (Mean = .91). This is a positive item in the scale and respondents agreed that they make a concerted effort to understand other people's point of view. In active listening the individual has to be active in order to understand the message from the speaker. Another positive item which has a high mean score is item number 12 (Mean = .81) This item emphasized the importance of asking people what they have said rather than making guesses at the meaning. Respondents also have positive listening skills when they agreed that understanding other's point of view is essential(Mean = .72) as shown by item 15.

However, respondents also showed high mean scores for negative items in the listening skills scale. For instance, item number 5 (Mean= .69) shows that respondents often assume that they already know what the other person is going to say even before he or she says it. Another negative item which has a high mean score is item number 6 (Mean = .62). Respondents usually end conversations that don't interest them by diverting their attention from the speaker. The first item in the scale ia also a negative item which has a rather high mean score (Mean = .59). For this item respondents agree that they frequently attempt to listen to several conversations at the same time.

Classification of Respondents	Listening Skills Score	Frequency	Percentage
Education	**9-15**	**46**	**32.3%**
	2-8	**94**	**67.1%**
Total		**140**	**100%**
Non Education	**9-15**	**37**	**59.6%**
	2-8	**25**	**40.3%**
Total		**62**	**100%**

Table 3 : Comparison between Education and Non Education Students In listening skills.

The above table shows that among the Education Students, 32.3% achieved a score of between 9 to 15 , that is the high category of listening skills. The majority of the students (67.1 %) only managed to score between 2 to 8 ,that is the low category of listening skills. For the non Education students, the proportion is quite different. The majority of the students (59.6%) achieved a score of 9 and above , which is the high category of listening skills, while the other 40.3% falls under the low category of listening skills.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that on the whole , the respondents of the study do not possess enough good listening skills. The percentage of students having weak listening skills is greater than the percentage of those in the high category of listening skills.This implies that the students have not utilized their potential in learning and in their effort to accumulate knowledge and skills at the university. In addition, this may also affect their future in terms of their career advancement and their daily communication with others. This is because listening was found to be crucial in communication at work whether it is at entry –level employment, job success, general career competence, managerial competency and effectiveness of relationships between supervisors and subordinates (Wolvin and Coakley 1991).

The fact that many students did not master the listening skills could be due to the questionnaire which was administered in the English language . This could be one reason why students fail to understand some of the concepts utilized in the questionnaire. Nevertheless , the items in the listening scale are quite moderate in the usage of the English language. Students at university level should be able to understand most of the terms used.

When students have low level listening skills this may have implications on their learning. In class they may not pay enough attention and this will have further

repercussions on the achievement in the courses that they attend. When they do not focus their attention on the lectures , they may miss many salient facts or figures that are needed in order to understand the course as a whole.
In non technical courses there are many abstract concepts which the students have to master. If they do not listen well , they may not grasp the real meaning of the concepts taught. In technical courses , students know that they cannot afford to miss any facts or explanation because if they do, then they cannot follow the course and they will fail in the end.

The non Education students who come from various faculties including Science and Environmental Studies, Computer Science and Information Technology, Economics and Management, seem to have better listening skills compared to the Education students. The nature of courses for the non education students could be a contributing factor as to why they need to listen more actively. Their courses are technical in nature, and they need to listen well in order to understand and to follow the course content at a higher level. If the students do not understand any of the course content, it is very difficult for them to proceed in the higher level and they may not even graduate.

Students may think that by merely attending classes they have fulfill the course requirement. But what is more important is whether they also listen actively in their classes and gain enough understanding of the course content. This will not only affect their learning but also their academic achievement at the end of four years at university.

The findings indicate that the listening skills among university students is far from satisfactory and there is a lot of room for improvement. Generally the level of listening skills is rather low especially among the non technical students.

Listening skills are not only useful to students as learners but also can contribute to their success in their future careers. They are as important as other living skills which they can apply anytime and anywhere in their daily lives.

Conclusion

From the findings it is clear that more efforts are needed in order to improve listening skills of students. The majority of students in the study seem to be in the category which needs to be improved. Only a moderate number of students who have good listening skills and they are the ones who will benefit most in university education as well as their future careers.

When a comparison is made between Education and non Education students, again we find a difference in the pattern of listening skills. For Education students a lower percentage of students are in the high category whereas a larger percentage of students are found in the lower category. On the other hand, for the non Education students (Science, Information Technology, Economics), a higher percentage of students are

found in the high category, whereas for low category listening skills the percentage is lower.

The overall pattern of listening skills among university students is that generally they are more students belonging to the low category of listening skills whereas for the high category of listening skills the percentage is moderately low. The pattern is opposite when comparison is made between the Education and non Education students.

The findings also have implications on lecturers who are involved in teaching the respondents. They should not take for granted when their students have achieved good grades , they should have good listening skills. This may not be so, looking at the low scores in listening skills of the respondents.

Suggestions

In order to improve students' listening skills , the university can embark on a training programme for students. Studies have shown that training in listening skills have proved to be effective in enhancing students' ability to listen and other long term effects on the students .

As students in higher education institution, they should be able to improve their listening skills through understanding of the process of active listening strategies. Listening is an active process that requires as much concentration and effort on the part of the receiver as sending the message does by the sender (lecturer). Activities such as `diagnosing your listening skills' should be self evaluated by the individuals. Students should put in more effort to improve or correct their negative behaviour to ensure effective communication will take place in the teaching and learning process.

Lecturers in the Education Faculty may have to help their students to improve their listening skills by verifying the message sent has been received and understood. Communication behaviour can be improved by having several interactions in an open environment to discuss and encover certain weaknesses and also to narrow the gaps between good and poor listening skills. Every student should work on improving his or her active listening skills.

References

Glenn E. C. and Pond E. A. (1989) . Listening Self-Inventory; from supervisory management. American Management Association (p.359). Celce-Murcia (Ed.), In Moorhead , G. and Griffin, R.W. (1995) Organizational Behaviour: Managing people and Organizations.

Hunsaker, R.A. (1991). 'Critical Thinking – A Neglected Skill', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Atlanta, October 31st – November 3, 1991).

International Listening Association. (1995, April). A ILA definition of Listening. ILA Listening Post, (53), pps.1&4.

Mckenzie, N. J. & Clark, A. J. (1995). The aa-in-one concept: How much must listening research include? International Journal of Listening, 9, 29-43.

Morley, J. (1991). Listening Comprehension in second/foreign language instruction. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), Teaching English as a second or foreign language (2nd. Ed.) (pp.88-106). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Nunan, D., & Miller, L. (Eds.) (1995). New Ways in Teaching Listening. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 388 054).

Robertson, A.K. (1994). Listen for success: A guide to Effective listening.Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing.

Schramm, R.M. & Wayne, F.S. (1993). Can listening skills be taught in business communication classes? NABTE Review (20), 25-32.

Theodore, C. (1991). Can one not communicate? A Conflict of Models, Communication Studies, 42:351.

Wolvin, A. & Coakley, C. (1991). A Survey of the status of listening training in some Fortune 500 Corporations. Communication Education, 40, 152-164.

Wynn,G. (1984). Team Management: Leadership by Concensus, Ohio: Charles E. Merril Publisher Co.

Biodata

Professor Dr. Habibah Elias is a lecturer in Educational Psychology attached to the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia since 1983. Her specialization is in Motivation, Learning, Personality and Economics Education. She has published a number of books in the above areas and also has presented many papers in national and international conferences. Currently she is the Coordinator of the Training Centre for Teaching and Learning at the Faculty.

Associate Professor Dr. Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie is the Deputy Dean, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her area of specialization is in

Educational Management and Leadership as well as Entrepreneurship Education. She has published books and articles in the above areas since 1987. She also had many opportunities to present her research findings in national and international conferences.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Listening Competence among University Students	
Author(s): Dr. Habibah Elias and Associate Professor Dr. Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie	
Corporate Source: University Putra Malaysia	Publication Date: 18.6.2003

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Habibah Zaidatol	Printed Name/Position/Title: Habibah Elias/Lecturer/Professor; Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie/Deputy Dean	
Organization/Address: Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia	Telephone: 603-8948208/8117	FAX: 603-89435386
	E-Mail Address: hbe@educ.upm.edu.my	Date: 13th October 03

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: info@ericfac.piccard.csc.com
WWW: http://ericfacility.org